



Earliest Interior Occurrence of Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) in British Columbia

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From the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*; Figure 1) was considered an “Occasional visitant to coast waters” (Brooks and Swarth 1925:32), becoming a “Regular winter visitant to the coast” of British Columbia (Munro and Cowan 1947:63). The latter status was based on 12 records of males collected or sighted during the 48-year period from the first provincial record in February 1898 (Kermode 1904)

through 9 January 1946 (Munro and Cowan 1947). The species was reported during this period between 9 January and 30 March (10 records) and on 30 October and 5 December. Ten of the records (75%) occurred in January and February (Munro and Cowan 1947), the height of the winter season. Surprisingly, most occurrences were from southeastern Vancouver Island (75%) and not the adjacent southwest mainland coast where huge flocks of American Wigeon (*A. americana*)



Figure 1. Almost all records of Eurasian Wigeon in British Columbia are of males, as the females of this and the congeneric American Wigeon are difficult to separate in the field. One of the earliest provincial records was from Esquimalt Lagoon on 25 February 1934 where this male was photographed there 71 years later on 19 February 2005. *Photo by Mark Nyhof*

overwinter (Campbell et al. 1990). European Wigeon is almost always found in association with American Wigeon. There were no records for the interior of the province between 1898 and 1946.

In adjacent Washington state, early occurrences of Eurasian Wigeon follow the general pattern for British Columbia. The species was first reported in 1915 (Bowles 1915) and through 1946 was recorded eight more times (Jewett et al. 1953:125). The species was considered a “Casual autumn and winter visitant in the Puget Sound country.” There were no records of occurrences in the interior of British Columbia.

While researching a memorial article on the late Glenn Ryder (Campbell and Henderson 2013), I uncovered the earliest unpublished records of Eurasian Wigeon for the interior region of British Columbia. Details, extracted verbatim from Ryder’s field notes, follow:

April 16, 1944 (Mission Creek, Kelowna) – *one with Baldplates [American Wigeon] on Mission Slough Creek Pond feeding this Bird is a male light tawny white top of head and the rest of the head is reddish Brown also the neck area grey on sides and Back Black on tail end.*

At the same time Glenn also noted that there were 12 American Wigeon on “Mission Slough” and another 100+ at the mouth of Mission Creek, located about 4.6 km south of Kelowna on the east side of Okanagan Lake. This constituted the second spring record for the province.

October 7, 1944 (Manhattan Point, Kelowna) – *one male light gray Black on rump red Brown head light Top of head with a Pinkish Breast area.*

The Eurasian Wigeon was with about 100 American Wigeon “at Manhattan Bay”, which is located about 1.9 km northwest of Kelowna on the east side of Okanagan Lake. The wintering flock of American Wigeon was subsequently checked in the vicinity of Manhattan Bay in 1944 (October 13, November 8 and 19), 1945 (March 3 and 24), and 1946 (February 2, 10, 16, and 20) without locating a Eurasian Wigeon.

The previous earliest published interior sightings for British Columbia were of a male reported at Kamloops in January 1967 (Jacobson 1974) and a male seen five years later at Okanagan Falls on 6 February 1971 (Cannings 1972).

It should be noted that until about 1965, Eurasian Wigeon remained in comparatively low numbers on the west coast of North America after which numbers increased significantly through the 1980s, including occurrences in the interior of British Columbia (Edgell 1984, Campbell et al. 1990). †

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